

Working Effectively in Interdisciplinary Teams

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management satellite network presents live from the BLM national training center in Phoenix, Arizona, the BLM planning and NEPA forum, a continuing series of televised courses and programs highlighting important topics on planning and NEPA in the BLM. Today's topic... "Working Effectively in Interdisciplinary Teams." Now your course facilitator, Joe Ross.

Good morning and welcome to the fourth installment of the planning and NEPA forum series. Today's forum will be a departure from our usual format. In this program we will focus on people. We'll discuss techniques and tips to improve interdisciplinary teams. From now on I will refer to them as I.D. teams. With me this morning to talk about teams is Linda Culver, a consultant from Prescott, Arizona. She has provided team training for BLM since 1995. Good morning, Linda.

Good morning, Joe. It's a pleasure to be here.

Next we have Abbie Jossie, Field Manager for the Grants Pass Resource Area in Oregon. Welcome Abbie.

Good morning, Joe, it's an honor to be here to be able to participate in the broadcast today.

Also we have with us this morning Jude Trapani, Fishery Biologist with the Salmon Field Office in Idaho. Good morning, Jude.

Good to be here.

Finishing out the panel is Karen Kelleher, a planning team lead with the Phoenix Field Office. What's travel advisory and looking like today?

The weather is sunny although we have had rain. So if anyone is interested in seeing the spring bloom, it may be possible this year.

Thanks a lot, Karen and all the panel members. You should all have a copy of the Participant Guide in front of you. We will be referring to it throughout the course. If you don't have it, it can be downloaded at the national training center's website. It contains more material than we will cover today. We've included extra information in this guide so that it will be a good desk reference. Please also use it for note taking today. As with all our telecasts, we'll let you know when it's okay to push to talk by putting a green light in the upper corner of your screen just like this. Push and hold the button to talk us to and you should stay about 12 to 18 inches from the mic so that we can hear you better. Say your name and your location that you're calling from, and then wait to be acknowledged. Please keep in mind that after you've made your question or comment, you'll need to release the mic button in order to hear us respond. If more than one of you try to talk at once, I'll use this time-out signal telling all of you to release their mics. Then identify which person should go first. If you didn't get the phone number and pass code for our phone bridge, please call our operator toll-free at the number shown on the screen. For those that don't have access to the push-to-talk system, we encourage you to fax in any questions or comments to the number on the screen.

Please include a name and location. A fax form can be found on page 6 of your Participant Guide. We will let you know a few minutes before each question and answer question begins so that you can get ready. Also feel free to jot down questions when you think of them.

Now I'd like to give you some information. First, a little background about this course. The design team for this training represented a cross section of BLM offices. We also received feedback on the teamwork issues that you wanted us to discuss and we did our very best to include them. We really appreciate all the responses we got from the field as well as the hundreds of people who took the pre-assessment. Hopefully the next few hours should give you some ideas to continue to improve team communication. Working in I.D. teams is a crucial part of BLM's work. Land use planning and environmental analysis receive a great deal of public scrutiny on both local and national levels. The effective interpersonal functioning of the I.D. team directly impacts the quality and effectiveness of our land use plans, implementation plans and NEPA analysis. Before we go further, let's take a moment to hear from Deb Rawhouser, Group Manager for Planning Assessment and Community Support in Washington D.C.

Good morning. A wise person once said you can have all the technology that money can buy, but if you don't have people working well together during the planning process, you won't achieve our goal of a well thought out decision document. Hi. I'm Deb Rawhouser, the new manager for Planning Assessment and Community Support in the BLM Washington office. Thank you for joining us today. Teams that work well together are a vital part of all our planning efforts. This is why we want to take time to

share with you lessons learned from successful interdisciplinary teams and techniques to solve some typical I.D. team pitfalls. As you know decisions are best made in a collaborative setting. Techniques and tools shared today will help you work better internally and externally with our partners. Along with the BLMers I would like to welcome participants from the Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and private contractors. We encourage all of you to participate using your push-to-talk systems or faxes and we look forward to answering your questions as well as hearing about your challenges and your successes. Thanks for all your hard work during the planning efforts. Your I.D. teams are critical to the success of BLM and our partners. Now let's rejoin the panel for today's discussion.

Thanks a lot, Deb. Let's go over the course objectives for today. First we'll discuss the qualities of good teams and the factors that lead to team successes. Second, we'll discuss some of the typical pitfalls that teams may encounter and then ask you to look at some scenarios involving unproductive team behaviors. You'll have a chance to try tools answers techniques that successful teams use to improve I.D. team skills. Let's first go to Abbie who will discuss the benefits every successful I.D. teams. You'll able to follow along on page 9 of the Participant Guide.

We're providing this training for two levels of team performance. This course will help newly formed teams get off to the right start and help existing teams improve their effectiveness. The benefits occur to individuals, the team itself, the organization, the process and the product. Here are some of those benefits. The commitment of the team. The team will have an enjoyable experience if they're committed to the process. And the team will celebrate their successes as a group. And the team can form bonds

throughout the process and that continues beyond just the project and the effort.

There will be common goals among the team and the team will be successful together. And working in teams develops a sense of group power. There's also continuous improvement which is the model of teamwork. It's a very worthwhile effort and it becomes a way of life eventually and people don't know why they haven't been doing it all along, not to mention that, but the management really appreciates that working in teams also achieves organizational goals and it results in improved communication, not only within the team, where the communication is more efficient, but it also helps the team clarify decisions and communicate directly with management. The morale on the team is also improved. Team members share information freely, which contributes to a better product. Empowerment is also a benefit. Teams accept the responsibility for the effort they're working on, and they can manage their own performance. And the team learns how to make decisions during the process. They also can work more directly with management and make those recommendations for future decisions.

Quality is also a benefit and it's defined as anticipating, conforming to or exceeding customer requirements. You do that by improving project time lines, increasing creativity and reducing costs. It is never too late to begin to improve a team's effectiveness. Continuous improvement should be our goal. Remember that human interactions are dynamic. They're affected throughout the process by organizational culture and driven by the need for good collaboration. Joe?